

The Trail of the Griffin.

WRITTEN FOR THE STAR BY IZOLA FORRESTER.

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It was on the beach that we first saw a cigarette and walked the length of the veranda in hot haste. The fourth time he threw the cigarette away and cursed under his breath. Chadbourn drew him at the head, the stone steps, and smiled amicably.

She walked across the stretch of esca-tinted sand, running the gauntlet of a hundred curious eyes with as perfect a sang froid and easy grace as if she had been Diana bathing in some lonely woodland pool.

And even at Buena Ventura, where beautiful mysteries were common, she formed so distinctive a type of her own that Buena Ventura paused in the midst of its morning dip to take a second look at the stranger.

She was dressed entirely in black, even to the pale satin cap that shielded her bright, blonde hair from the waves. And pinned in the center of the black satin bow knot above her forehead was a diamond ornament, so unique and brilliant that it riveted attention.

It was a small, perfect griffin, fashioned of diamonds, and it caught every glancing of sunlight, the radiance of the rainbow and sea foam.

She was watched from the time she stepped into the sea. There was no hesitancy, nor loitering along the beach; she plunged freely into deep water and swam far out in the satin cap was a mere dot on the wave crests.

Chadbourn followed the course of the dot through his eyeglasses. When she emerged from the water and passed quickly up the walk to the bath house he followed her, still in his dark satin cushion, until suddenly he stooped and picked up some thing from the sand at his feet.

"Collecting shells?" he asked, casually.

He smiled, the grave, faraway, half cynical smile which won him new friends, and turned toward the hotel.

"Yes," he said, "pearls."

After dinner we sat together on the hotel veranda smoking. It was a glorious August night. The waters of the bay were as smooth as glass, with the wavering reflections from the lights like tiny stars.

The other stood for a full minute, his hands deep in his pockets, his cigarette tilted in the center of his lips, but Chadbourn's eyes, goodnatured and never alighted on her, and the light of the devil flashed suddenly in his eye.

"Wait here a moment," he said, under his breath, as a party came into the cafe.

"I'll be back," said Chadbourn, with the dogged carelessness of a boy. "I shall marry her, and I think she knows it."

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"I prefer to deal with Mrs. Dorian herself. My mother's several facts in the case gives me a slight advantage over you. We shall probably meet again. It is barely possible that I shall not leave for Frisco on the 7:10, in spite of your scuttle."

Chadbourn waited until the man and suit case were out of sight in the hotel corridor, then he joined me with his old, frank air of comradeship.

"No. The initials on his suit case were N. R. He returned to San Francisco to night. She is a widow."

A tall, slender figure in black stood outside the French windows of the hotel parlor, then crossed the veranda and went down into the garden. Chadbourn waited until it had vanished among the shadowy palms and vines and rose and followed. He had an instant's start, but the figure, the figure black, and as they passed me I caught the sparkle of diamonds on her breast, and knew Chadbourn had restored what he had found in the sand.

For a week Buena Ventura had the pleasure of seeing Chadbourn play cavalier to the pride of the diamond griffin. His yacht lay at anchor idly on the bay, except when Mrs. Wade chose to sail. Telegrams began to arrive from the east for him, and he lay suspended, head in woman's voice above to the small iron balcony belonging to one of the parlor floor suites.

"I do not care what happens, I will remain here until the middle of August at least."

"What about the griffin?" It was N. R.'s voice. Chadbourn took a step forward, every muscle tense with repression.

"She is the most charming woman I have ever met; the kind of a woman a man might love and never even question what her past had been."

"Love, I agreed; but marry?" He looked up at the doorway where Mrs.

When we had reached the hotel entrance Chadbourn drew a deep breath of relief.

"Thoroughbred, isn't she?" he asked.

"I really believe she will be there on the 15th."

He had been mildly interestedly devoted before. From that night he tossed discretion to the winds and played to win or die. As the 15th drew near he merely imagined that he could stake all on one last chance, and it happened that the chance came in the rose garden the night before the 15th.

There had been a chance in Buena Ventura from the time the evening Mrs. Wade did not care to dance. Chadbourn and she had taken possession of the prettiest, most secluded corner of the veranda, and she had been singing softly to the accompaniment of Chadbourn's mandolin. She had been singing softly to the accompaniment of Chadbourn's mandolin. Florence, with her dark eyes and reddish-gold hair, in a dress of white chiffon with great black lace butterflies sprawling over its clinging folds.

I knew that the end had come when I saw Chadbourn fall her down among the roses in the moonlit garden. An hour later he returned to the veranda alone, and threw himself down on the low settee where she had sat, his face hidden in the soft silk cushions, still rumpled and crushed by the imprint of her fall.

"She's going back," he said, and his voice was very quiet and self-contained.

"Tomorrow. I told her about it—how I cared for her no matter what she had done. I told her that I'd shoot that man if it would make her happier. I told her it all, and when the world had ranged against her, I loved her, and would make her my wife. I never talked to a woman before in my life, Bob, and I thought she cared."

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